

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Take a trip back in time to Bugatti, Bertone and Giugiaro in 1993](#)

Lead

In 1993, young automotive design student Markus Haub set off on a pilgrimage to Italy, the capital of car design. He visited Bertone, Giugiaro and Pininfarina in Turin, marvelled at the latest cars at the Bologna Motor Show and took a look behind the scenes at Bugatti.



At the beginning of 1993, I started studying car design in Pforzheim. I finally met some like-minded people to share my passion with, and we organised a trip to Italy. Back then, it was all about design. Bertone, Ghia, Pininfarina, Giugiaro, Gandini. Those were the big names! So off over the Alps we went. Beyond the border, the guardrails became rusty, the radio started picking up Gianna Nannini and the coffee had to be paid for in softened lire. Our pilgrimage took us first to Turin, then on to Bologna for the motor show. The unforgettable highlight of our trip, however, was a visit to the Bugatti factory in Campogalliano, which we'd organised in advance.

Turin



The capital of Piedmont isn't pretty in the classic sense, and in winter it looked even dirtier and more morbid than usual due to fog. But that's exactly what made it so charming. We dragged the heavy industrial air through our noses like perfume and let the cobblestones rattle our dark blue Fiat Uno diesel on our somewhat different city tour. The route took us past the Lingotto factory to Grugliasco, an industrial area in the west of the city.

At that time, this was the headquarters of Carrozzeria Bertone and its production facility, in which parts of or entire cars were built, such as the Lancia Stratos, Alfa Romeo Montreal, Fiat 850 Spider, Volvo 780 and Fiat X1/9. It also produced convertibles for Fiat and Opel, including the Kadett and Astra. The last thing to roll off the production line in 2005 was a special series of the MINI Cooper - compensation from BMW for ending production of the C1 scooter early. Fiat bought the factory in 2012, demolished it and built a new plant for Maserati. Only part of the entrance area remains, including the stairs and a small canopy.



Pininfarina was just around the corner: not the design department, but the factory, where it had stood since 1958. The Alfa Giulietta Spider, Duetto and Fiat 124 once rolled off the production line here, but the wind tunnel was architecturally more interesting. It was built in 1972 as the first in Italy and used by the design house to create numerous aerodynamic prototypes. In 2009, the plant was sold, but the tunnel remained in the possession of Pininfarina.

Our last stop in Turin was Italdesign in Moncalieri. Here, too, peering in the factory gate had to suffice, as we imagined the old master Giugiaro drawing dream cars like the Maserati Bora, Lotus Esprit or BMW M1 here with a sharp pencil as if on an assembly line. We looked forward to seeing some of his latest designs in Bologna the next day.

Bologna



By the time of our visit, the Bologna Motor Show majored on outdoor motorsport displays, as well the odd second-tier 'world premiere' of something like a Citroen ZX estate or SEAT Cordoba. But in 1993, it played host to the Fiat Coupé, which had already caused quite a stir. At the Italdesign stand, we were amazed by concepts such as the Biga city car, the huge Columbus, the BMW Nazca C2 Spider and the Fiat Lucciola, which Giugiaro later transformed into the Daewoo Matiz.



However, the highlight of our trip was Bugatti. The stand at the show was impressive, with the exhibits including a silver EB110 SS. This was prototype S5, which later served as a test car for the IMSA race series. It sported a black rear wing, a GT-style front wing and no brake ventilation slot behind the front wheel. But the factory tour the next day topped that.

Campogalliano



And so we chugged on to Campogalliano, parking in the visitor lot. From there, you could see into the glass rotunda where the offices and design studio were housed, while there was also an open showroom on the first floor for special occasions. The factory was built in the late 1980s, very close to those of Lamborghini, Maserati and Ferrari on the A22 motorway, after Romano Artioli acquired the naming rights to Bugatti and poached a competent team from the competition. From 1991, the EB110 GT, with a 3.5-litre V12 engine, 550hp and a top speed of 342kph, was built here.



We reverently entered the entrance hall, lined with white marble, and waited until an employee gave us a friendly welcome. We started the tour with him and walked past the heart of the factory, a blue cube with a huge Bugatti logo and white ventilation pipes. This was the test and development department for engines, housing a then-unique all-wheel roller dynamometer. Continuing on to the assembly hall, the oversized 'EB' logo was embedded in the concrete outer walls and the side windows went down to the floor to let daylight in. You could feel the attention to detail that made this factory a real work of art.



Inside the approximately 5,000-square-metre main hall, we got an insight into the final assembly process. You could eat off the floor here, I thought. Everything was sparkling clean, totally tidy and arranged in boxes. Large-format side views of old Bugatti models hung from the ceiling, while the almost-finished EB110s sitting below were mostly blue, silver or black. The cars we saw on the production line were likely to have been the first four SS models. Three of these went to the Sultan of Brunei, finished in silver, black and yellow, while the fourth was a blue example for a customer in Spain.





To our amazement, between some carbon-fibre chassis and finished cars stood a Suzuki Cappuccino, a 3.3-metre-long right-hand-drive 'kei car' roadster from Japan, which only came to Europe in very small numbers the following year. I don't remember why it was there, but it certainly had something to do with the fact that Artioli had been Italy's largest importer of Japanese cars since the 1980s, especially Suzukis.

He also operated the largest Ferrari dealer base and served, among other areas, the northern Italian and southern German markets. In principle, he used this trading empire to finance the the rebirth of Bugatti and also the purchase of Lotus. But the capital melted away when the global financial crisis hit, and there were internal issues to deal with, too. By September 1995, the company was filing for bankruptcy.



A total of 96 EB110 GT and 34 EB110 SS were built. The already fully developed EB112 saloon, designed by Giugiaro and shown as a prototype at Geneva in 1993, never saw the light of day. The seven-hectare site has since been abandoned and most of the inventory has been auctioned off. What remains is what apparently had no value or could not be removed. Two large white porcelain frescoes in the canteen still bear witness to the glamorous times when the 200 employees came together and ate delicious pasta, basking in the Italian supercar dream.

Text and Photos: [Markus Haub / Garage X](#)

Gallery

